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THE MORALITY OF FORCE

BY HARTLEY B. ALEXANDER

A REMARKABLE book is being read today in France. It is called *L'Expansion de l'Allemagne*, and its author is a Frenchman, Captain Henri Andrillon. The book, which was published shortly before the War, is an earnest effort to gauge the forces, physical and moral, which underlie the threat of German domination, and by analysis of the peril to forearm the author's countrymen to meet it. Captain Andrillon is a loyal soldier and patriot. His style is detached and dispassionate; he lets his facts speak for themselves, or, if he deals with theories and deductions, he presents them with a logical directness that leaves the impression of a philosophic indifference to all save the truth. There is no atmosphere of the tribune about Captain's Andrillon, no political extravagance, no flushed and noisy chauvinism; he writes as, since the war has come, Frenchmen have shown us they can fight: quietly and with a head for the business in hand. On the whole, *The Expansion of Germany* seems to me the fair counterpart of *Germany and the Next War*, and Captain Andrillon himself a good Gallic equivalent for General von Bernhardi.

On the physical and historical side of Captain Andrillon's argument, I shall not dwell. He pictures Germany's material preparations for war, military and economic, and he analyzes astutely her diplomatic policies looking to the same end. But all of these he very properly subordinates to the conscious and highly developed moral ideal of which they are but the outward symptom. The key to recent German history is German sentiment, as he sees it; and he finds this sentiment to be curiously well organized and united.

With the main features of the morality which Captain Andrillon depicts we had already become familiar. At its foundation lies that belief in the natural superiority of the Germanic race and of Germanic institutions to other races and institutions, whose political expression is Pan-Germanism. Our author cites the German historian Giesebrecht: "Dominion belongs to Germany because she is a chosen nation, a noble race, to whom it falls to act toward her neighbors as is the right and duty of all men endowed with more spirit or force to act upon surrounding individuals less well endowed"; and he quotes again from one of the leaders of Pan-Germanism, Herr Schonerer: "We are not only men, we are more, because we are Teutons, because we are Germans." This belief received, as it were, its official sanction in the utterances of the reigning Kaiser: "The genius of Germany aspires to the empire of the world," he said in 1902; and in 1907: "The German people will be the block of granite upon which Our Lord can raise and complete the civilization of the world. Then will be realized the word of the poet:

An deutschem Wesen
Wird einmal noch die Welt genesen.

Very likely William II was thinking, in these utterances, of the peaceful conquests of commerce and science quite as much as of the triumphs of war, but the background of the thought is clearly that of a people whose "national industry is war," as has been said of Prussia. "The great questions of the time," Bismarck had said in 1862, "will not be decided by talk or by the decisions of majorities . . . but by iron and blood." And this dogma of iron and blood became the marrow of Germany's aggressive sentiment. Its outward dress, however, was still cast in the form of a moral philosophy. The simplest statement of it is the phrase of Deputy Schwerin in the Prussian Chamber in 1863, summarizing Bismarck's policy: "*Macht geht vor Recht*—Might before Right; say what you will, we have the power and we will put our theory into practice." But this simple form was too baldly blunt for philosophic Germany. It required that paradoxical air of thought which Nietzsche brought to the problem of conduct really to make the idea carry. Nietzsche, with his theory of the superb *Uebermensch* (that "great blond Beast" in which every Teuton must perforce

see, his own idealized self) magnificently appropriating whatever is desirable of the world's good—Nietzsche, with his Superman, supplied just the needed image to make the philosophic German realize his mighty destiny. And Captain Andrillon finds the beginning and the end, the alpha and omega, of the German ideal in that phrase which Nietzsche had designed for the title of an unfinished book: "The Will to Power"—the will to rule, cost what it may.

II

But it is not in the substance of the German ideal, as Captain Andrillon sees it, nor even in its truthfulness as representing the sentiment of the German people, that I am primarily interested, but rather in the lesson which he draws from it for his own France. The world is moved, history is made, he says, by ideals; it is ideals that engender the power which moulds nations out of peoples. Thus France, the French nationality of today, is the creation of the humanitarian ideal of the eighteenth century. The belief that all men are born free and equal, the belief in the natural rights and dignity of the individual, the belief in the brotherhood of mankind: these were the great tenets of the humanitarian school. "The heroic revolution of 1789 was born of a dream of Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity, common to all Frenchmen," says Captain Andrillon; and in this dream the French nation still lives: the Frenchman still puts his humanity above his nationality, his manhood above his citizenship.

Is this dream, is this humanitarianism, an illusion after all? asks Captain Andrillon. Above all, is it as a moral ideal inferior in force and impetus to the German ideal, the Will to Power? He answers both of these questions with an emphatic affirmative. The state of liberty, equality and fraternity dreamed of by the French of 1789 was in opposition to the natural law of progress, as sketched by the Darwinian biologists. The idea of it has filled France with utopian idealists and dreaming pacifists; like a disease they have sapped the manly strength of the nation—and he more than hints that this disease has been cleverly fed and spread by German intriguers. "The quest of dominion, war, are the fatal consequence of human nature," he says; ". . . and in the inevitable day of conflict, though the pacific peoples

sometimes defend themselves with heroism, they are invariably vanquished." The German ideal is of more practical value than the French because it rests directly and unaffectedly upon a fundamental law of nature: the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest.

But while the German ideal is incontestably of greater practical value than the humanitarian, is it morally of more worth?—for Captain Andrillon well knows that there are men who prefer death to domination, or to preach the gospel in chains rather than to abjure the faith. Nevertheless, even in this regard the Germans have the better of it. It is a great error, he says, to deny to force a moral value, or to place the two things in opposition to one another, as is so often done in France: force against right, justice against force. History shows us that "in all evolution the triumphs of progress are only the triumphs of force; in the social life in particular, the collectivities which have survived are the collectivities militarily, economically, intellectually and morally the most perfect, the collectivities which have best known how, at the opportune moment, to assemble all their forces and give to them an invincible power; these have survived, and they have survived because this was justice, because they have had not the power but the right. History shows us that if there has never been right without force, there has equally never been durable force without right, nor veritable right that has not ended by acquiring the force necessary for its triumph."

"To be sure," he continues, "we must recognize that the German point of view is not irreproachable from a philosophic and moral point of view; the rule of the strongest, the survival of the fittest, war: all these create for the weak, and indeed for all humanity, a dolorous destiny. But if this ideal satisfies neither the reason nor the sensibility of the honest man, this is because he is not in harmony with the necessities of universal life, and because the realities of the universe are not themselves in perfect accord with all the dreams of the spirit and all the desires of the heart. This ideal fails to satisfy us because universal evolution, if it has rationality, has such a rationality as neither the intellect nor the heart of man may know. And inasmuch as it is not given to men to change the nature of things, inasmuch as the will to live peaceably is incompatible with the will to live, there can be only one moral law possible for those great peoples

who do not wish to succumb in the universal struggle: that of effort with a view to the possession of force."

It is on these grounds that Captain Andrillon urges his native France to abandon her humanitarian tradition, and to adopt as her own that Will to Power in whose Germanic manifestation her existence lies threatened.

III

I have dwelt upon Captain Andrillon's book for the reason that it gives such a clear and contrasting picture of the ideals which are the stake in the Great War. It presents, too, the spectacle of a highly intelligent and thoroughly sincere man deciding against the ideals which have been the tradition of European civilization and which his own nation has brought to their fullest expression. Patriotism, philosophy, his own sense of honor, are obviously hurt by this decision, but reason and the truth of the world as he sees it will not permit of any other conclusion: the slow centuries which have cumulatively pitted the conceptions of law, justice, and humanity against the doctrine of force, have been wrong, he decides; they have only served to imperil the civilization they express; ere it be too late let us advert to the simple and brutal maxim that "might makes right," and save what we cherish by forcing our way into the ranks of the mighty.

No word of mine is needed to point how directly such a conversion affects our own higher interests. We have been educated in the belief in the superiority of law and justice to mere force, in a kind of religious veneration for democracy and humanity. Have we been blindly, nay, perilously so educated? Are our ideals, social, national, philosophical, all founded in error and delusion? Are they all fraught with the peril of false security and poisoned with self-destruction? Is Darwinism true of human society as well as of the bestial world? Is Nietzsche's Will to Power to be the fundamental moral maxim, the Golden Rule, of the culture of the future? Are we to erect his *Uebermensch*, his "great blond Beast," as the image of human salvation to replace the *Christus crucifixus*? Doubtless to many of us the issue seems too preposterous for serious discussion; but it is no part of safety to avert the gaze from present dangers. Pitiless necessity demands of us that we play the part of men, and face the truth, however pitiless.

IV

As I read Captain Andrillon's book, I thought of Plato and the Platonic Socrates, and of the great arguments about justice in which Plato makes such easy disposal of the Sophists who in his day were saying that power is the greatest good and that the only right is the right of the stronger—for there were plenty of Nietzsches in the Athens of Pericles and Creon. Was it too easy, Plato's answer to Callicles and Thrasymachus—too easy to be true? And the great tradition of law and justice which rings back to Plato's voice: is it, also, wrong? Are we deceived about God?

Plato's doctrine of justice has the grandeur of simplicity. In states and societies, justice, as he views it, is order and harmony: it is the law of simplicity in life, of restraint in ambition, of proportionality in desire; it is the law that each man shall have what is his own, his equity in the world's good, and that the well-being of every man shall consist in his participation in the well-being of the whole—the whole state, nation, humanity. But this justice of states, Plato held, is only the external manifestation of that prior justice which is the harmony of man's soul. Justice within the soul is a proportionality of the virtues, of courage and temperance and wisdom; it is the health and beauty and well-being of the soul, just as injustice is the soul's disease and weakness and deformity; truth is its armor and love of truth its defense.

But of what good is this law-and-order justice, of what profit, if a man perish? This is the reiterant Sophistic question: What gain in being just, if a man die for it? Callicles—and here he gives Nietzsche's whole text—cites the divergence of the rule of nature and the rule of men's law: The rule of nature, he says, is the rule of the stronger, and the good of nature is simply the power to gratify desire, and the only dishonor is to suffer helpless injury. The rule of men's law, on the other hand, is the rule of weakness; human law is the device of the weak to protect themselves against the strong, and their praise of equality before the law is their adulation of their own inferiority. In a similarly contemptuous spirit Nietzsche speaks of the Church which has made of "the love story the one real interest which binds all classes together," and the Deputy Schwerin enunciates his modern version of the rule of nature—*Macht geht vor Recht*.

The just man is of all men the most defenseless, sneers Callicles, for he will not commit injustice even to save himself: "For suppose, my dear Socrates," he says, "that some one were to take you, or any one of your sort, off to prison, declaring that you had done wrong when you had done no wrong, you must allow that you would not know what to do: there you would stand, giddy and gaping, and not having a word to say; and when you went up before the court, even if the accuser were a poor creature and not good for much, you would die if he were disposed to claim the penalty of death."

Socrates has three answers which he makes to Callicles—the three answers which are Plato's reply to the Sophists of all time. The first is an ironical retort in kind. "O my wise Callicles," he says, "right you say is on the side of might; very well then, agreeing, right is on the side of law and justice, for the demos which makes the laws enforces them against the few who would break and defile them; the consensus of mankind not only applauds justice, but makes it powerful." This, I say, is irony in the mouth of Socrates; but it may become a very terrible and fateful reality if spoken by the Allied nations against that Germany which has so lightly flouted their conception of international right: We will take you at your own rule, they may say: The law of life is the law of battle; let the fit survive!

But the Platonic Socrates would have stopped short of this, for his mind was set on other things. "True, O Callicles, there is a law of nature which seems often at variance with the law of men; and it may even be that the law of nature will require of a man that he die for his humanity's sake. But of evils, death is not the greatest, nor are all arts but arts of self-preservation. Humanity requires of a man not that he live only, but that he live well; and a little of righteous living outweighs all the extravagances of depravity; God forbid me the spectacle of the patriarch in vice!"

Furthermore,—and this is Socrates' last point,—there is an eternity in righteousness which makes it stronger than any power of a day. In the *Crito*, when Socrates is in prison, facing death, and is urged to escape, he hears the laws of his country, under which he has been condemned, saying: "Listen, Socrates, to us who have brought you up. Think not of life and children first, and of justice after-

wards, but of justice first, that you may be justified before the princes of the world below. . . . Depart a sufferer and not a doer of evil; a victim, not of the laws, but of men." In the *Gorgias* Socrates tells in a myth of the administration of justice by the lords of death. Minos and Rhadamanthus and Aeacus are seated in the ghostly meadows at the parting of the ways which lead, the one to grim Tartarus, the other to the Isles of the Blest, passing upon the souls that come before them the judgments of that law which is the justice of God. And no man, says Socrates, "who is not an utter fool and coward is afraid of death itself, but he is afraid of doing wrong; for to go to the world below having one's soul full of injustice is the last and worst of evils." The vision of Er, the son of Armenius, repeats the conception on a cosmic scale. There at the world's center he beheld the throne of Necessity, upon whose knee rests the spindle-whorl of the universe; beside her are the white-robed Fates, Lachesis, Clotho, and Atropos, spinning out the threads of men's destinies, which are the threads of eternal justice.

Plato's images in these tales are the images of pagan myth, but his meaning is the meaning which after him the whole Christian world avowed as its creed: that the issues of human history and the struggles of men's souls are not decided by the triumphs of a day, but come for their final appraisalment before the tribunal of God.

V

But Plato, the idealist, and Socrates, the martyr, are these after all the men who are to set for us measures of conduct? In a world where *Realpolitik* is so often and so bitterly assertive can we afford to rest our causes with the dim justifications of eternity? Men's lips do full oft eloquently belie their deeds: the praise of virtue is easier than her service; the hands of the mighty are seldom clean, and the wrath of the Lord is long delayed. We have a number of harsh maxims: a bird in hand; might makes right; necessity knows no law—wisdom at its kernel, won in the hardship of living. Is it not best to stick to the safe and sure realities—unpleasant as they may be—for what we shall do, if not for what we shall praise?

History has given us at least a partial answer, and in Plato's favor. The whole fabric of European civilization rests for its support upon the structure of Roman law. And

this law, not only in spirit but in source, goes back to Plato for its crucial definitions. *Jus est ars boni et aequi*, law is the art of the good and the fair—the equitable, as we say: this is Celsus' phrase for that external bond which unites men in formal societies; and Ulpian it is who, in the very image of Plato, defines justice as "the constant and perpetual will to render to everyone his right and due." Law is the art of discovering the good; and justice is the soul's self-mastery: these are the sentiments which the Platonic Socrates is forever advocating, and they are the principles which Roman law made into the foundation of a world-civilization.

And law with the Romans, while in the beginning it represented the narrowly national institutions of the city of Rome, in the end came to be the statement of the rights of man. Beyond the boundaries of the *jus civile*, the law of the city, the Roman jurist recognized a *jus gentium*, sanctioned by the customs of mankind, and yet beyond this a *jus naturale*, grounded in the eternal nature of men as human beings, in the divinely implanted instincts of mankind; by the law of the city and even by an international law of races a man might be held as a slave, but by the undying law of human nature man was born free. It is no matter of wonder that such a conception of law should have made possible the establishment of progressive states, or that mediaeval thinkers should have identified the *jus naturale* with the law of God, or that it should have suggested to thinkers of a later day the great doctrine of the rights of man, in whose heredity our own nation was born.

But it would be unfair and untrue to say that this is the sole conception of law which has been and is being tried out by European civilization. For the states of western Europe have grown up in the barbarian and feudal law of the Germanic conquerors of the Romans, as well as in the Roman law. The essence of this Germanic law is the privilege of the strong. In the Salic code the fine for slaying a Roman is half that for slaying a Frank, and in the Anglo-Saxon code of Aethelberht the wite for slaying a carl is only six per cent. of that for a freeman's murder. The whole principle of feudal law is the subservience of the weak to the strong; the feudal hierarchy took form as the expression of the need of the feeble for protection against the powerful and the rapacious. A man was not his own man, nor, as under

Roman law, a state's citizen, but he was his lord's man; and his whole place in society was determined by his overlord's personal ascendancy. Correspondingly, rights were mainly the rights of the suzerain, natural rights which the vassal had surrendered in seeking protection. Even in its noblest embodiment, in the law of chivalry, the strong is still the protector of the weak, and the righteousness of the cause of the afflicted damosel lay ever at the peril of the uncertain strength of her knight's right arm. The whole essence of this law is the privilege of the strong. No historic contrast could be sharper, I imagine, than that of the Greek, with his love for the rhetorical pleadings of the courts, or the Roman with his passion for reasoned justice, with the Teuton's dull suspicion of verbal laws and decisions and his hardy determination to fight out his differences, man to man.

VI

And it is just this contrast which is today presented to us in the new guise of international relations. Within civilized states the principles of Roman law and Greek justice have come to be the recognized principles of social organization; citizens no longer go about with sidearms; and the last resort of the code of honor and the duel is in the military caste of militaristic empires. But in the external relations of states with states no similar development has as yet been achieved. To be sure there are customs of nations, uncertain in definition and frail in observance, which have been honored with the name of International Law; but the only sanction that can give validity to such a law must be a general agreement as to what constitutes the natural right of humanity; international law, if it is to prevail, must found itself in a convincing philosophy of nature, just as the *jus gentium* of the Romans was founded in their conception of the *jus naturale*.

And what philosophy of nature will modern peoples and modern nations find convincing? Will it be the Darwinian law of the battle of life, and the righteous survival of the bloodletter, strong in thews or strong in craft? Will it be the law of the unthinking beasts, applied, as Nietzsche would apply it, to thinking men and thinking nations—a *Kulturkrieg*, knowing no rule but its own necessities and no need but conquest? The thing seems to me monstrous and hor-

rible, with the very monstrosity and horror of that Titanism which the Greeks threw back into the dim and lawless era of Earth's parturitions. And yet it is the very principle upon which *Realpolitik* rests; the very principle which Captain Andrillon, coolly convinced of its truth, urges his own countrymen to adopt in place of their hereditary doctrine of the rights of man; the very principle which today is being tried out in Europe by combat, in the ancient Germanic fashion.

But to save us from this, what substitute can be offered that will actively appeal to the truth-loving intelligence? Darwinism has taken a terrible toll of men's faith, and surely this is because it has at its core a convincing truth. Aye, truth it has; and Captain Andrillon is right when he says that "the realities of the universe are not in perfect accord with all the dreams of the spirit and all the desires of the heart." He is right: nature and human nature, fact and reason, passion and intellect, are often out of accord with one another. Plato saw this with unwavering eyes, and he made it the compass of his philosophy: nought is more certain, he held, than the conflict of sense and idea; nought is more sure than the imperfection of unredeemed nature; nought is more inevitable than the partial defeat of justice in the world of affairs. And yet, he maintained, justice alone is worth living for; justice alone represents the godlike in man's soul; and whatever the cost in service, be it life itself, justice is the only secure possession which a man's soul may bring before the tribunal of God.

I have said that the progress of civilization, in spite of momentary surrenders, has been in the support of Plato. Nothing shows this more steadily than the roll of the world's heroes. These are not the Cæsars and Napoleons of history, not the Supermen of War; but they are men who, like Socrates, feared the laws of death more than the laws of life, and so preferred to live well rather than to live long. Socrates, Giordano Bruno, St. Peter and St. Paul, Jesus of Nazareth . . . such are the nobles of our race, whose very names cause the hearts of men to beat high with the pride of manhood; and in the tale of the centuries they have been justified in the emulations of their disciples long after the empires of the warlords have dissolved and vanished.

But there is still a question: Can the law which we apply to human individuals be applied also to human states? Can

the law of justice ever become international, so that a state, a nation, nay, even a race and civilization, may prefer death to dishonor? So far as the internal affairs of nations are concerned, the scale has turned in favor of Plato, in favor of human nature as against Titanism and brute nature, and not all the dogma of Darwin and Nietzsche can reverse it: but is this true also of nations? . . . One cannot answer the question simply, for the world is at war over it; and however the die falls, no man knows what creed, whether the creed of passion or the creed of reason, will be in the blood of the victor. But I can point to one great and undeniable triumph of the spirit of justice eternal, which the war has already created. Heroic Belgium, choosing defeat that is well-nigh death rather than the fatness and ease of a dishonored servitude, is the very image among the nations of today of those qualities which have heretofore given us heroes among men. "What our geographical frontiers will be tomorrow I know not," writes the Abbé Noël in an article on the Soul of Belgium. "But I do know that our moral position in the world will henceforth be other than it was. In the most terrible crisis of history we have suddenly found ourselves confronted by a duty which we little expected. Yet, nourished as it was in reverence for right, the nation understood without a moment's hesitation, and as one man, that this duty was sacred, and instantly grappled it with all the energy of its loyal and believing soul. In presence of brutal aggression the old instinct of freedom asserted itself with the energy of other days, and Belgium, hardly perceiving what had happened, was plunged into a world-war for right and for liberty. She it is who personifies this cause, and to her has fallen the honor of suffering martyrdom on its behalf. She lies wounded, panting, but fighting on. All the nations bend over her with their love and veneration. Tomorrow, when Force shall have yielded to Justice, Belgium will cherish the right to speak and to act in the new world which is coming to birth."

So writes the Abbé Noël; and whatever may be the immediate outcome of the present trial by combat, do we not feel assured in our hearts that he speaks the living truth as it will be pronounced in the final judgment before the tribunal of God?

HARTLEY B. ALEXANDER.